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Title:

VE Day / VP Day - Recorded message from Hon. R. S. Richards

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The European war has ended and so closes the most inhuman conflict known to history. With all reverence I say, "Thank God." But the Pacific war is still with us. We have yet to wear down and destroy those forces which sought to over-run our fair country and wreck our civilization. In our jubilation over German's defeat let us not under-value our responsibilities in the conflict with Japan. We all pay homage to each and every member of the services for their sacrifices and skill in bringing us this victory, but we have a duty beyond that of flag waving and cheering. To us, who through age or infirmity have been unable to take an active part in fighting, is left the unmistakable duty of proving that we are worthy of the sacrifices made on our behalf. Charters cannot be kept nor gratitude portrayed without individual expressions by word and deed in the building of a new world structure that will give to every son of man an equal opportunity to enjoy social justice and economic security. We said it was for such a world that we went to war. Having won the war let us then, with Divine guidance, direct our energies to this ideal and so WIN THE PEACE. There is much to be done, after the tumult and the shouting dies, we shall have that unavoidable calm. That period of reflection, when the welfare of those who fought and the dependants of those who died should be our major consideration. This will be the testing time for us all. The problems associated with this aspect of our responsibilities will not be solved by flag waving and cheering, nor with pious platitudes or high sounding phrases. They can only be met by the unselfish approach of a grateful people who, without reservation, bend their energies to the task of rehabilitation and reconstruction by building a social structure based on the brotherhood of man, and the Fatherhood of God. I think I am voicing the feeling of the vast majority of our people when I say, "We thank God for the victory that guarantees our liberty."

V.P. DAY.....HON. R.S. RICHARDS.

Fellow Australians. So at long last it is over. The war drums throb no longer; the battle flags are furled," and a war-weary world longs for a period of peace and repose. Rest after weariness, sleep after pain. It is just over three months since I expressed my joy and thankfulness to God for the closing of the European conflict - now I pay sincere and reverent homage for this great deliverance. But the end is not yet if we really believed in the principles or the creeds which we preached during those days of darkness and despair. We must surely strive to implement them now that the sun has once again broken through the clouds and is showering its light on a universe which has become so tired of man's inhumanity to man. This is the day of reckoning for we who owe so much to those who fought and bled and died that we might live. Words of praise and commendation sound so nice; decorations and titles may flatter the individual and satisfy the ambitions of some, but there surely remains a higher and nobler tribute to pay to that silent and suffering mass of heroes who carried the torch of liberation through the years of doubt, despondency and, even despair, that beset we non-combatants. That tribute lies in our acknowledgement of their sacrifice, and our acceptance of the responsibility to carry on the fight for human emancipation - as Lowell, the American writer and poet put it when writing on the capture of fugitive slaves, "Shame on the costly mockery of piling stone on stone to those who won our liberty; the hero's dead and gone; while we look calmly on and see law-shielded ruffians slay. The men who vain would win their own; the heroes of today". Do those words convey anything to you listeners? How are we to implement the principles incorporated in the Atlantic Charter without a change of outlook and, indeed, a change of heart? Are we to wage war on want? Shall we pledge ourselves to free the human race from fear? Do we really intend to provide a free press where every school of thought shall have equal opportunities to express itself? Do we really intend to establish religious and political freedom? These are a few of the things our war leaders told us we are fighting for. Now the fight is finished, 'the airy navies have ceased to drop their costly bales';

no longer are the machines of destruction 'plunging through the thunderstorm.' Once again peace and tranquility rest like a cloak over the world and the human family pauses in its journey to relax. For how long shall we relax? Whilst another conflagration of hatred bred of social and economic injustices, breaks upon the world, or are we to rest just long enough to give us energy to take up the torch and carry on the crusade until we have firmly established the common right of all men to an equitable share of the fruits of creation - or in other words, the right to live on an even plane with their fellows. Without this, all the sacrifices and suffering born of six years of war will have been in vain. Truly our responsibilities are great, but they can be met easily by a people who, conscious of the debt they owe, are determined to meet it in full. Is that to be our determination? How will you and I respond to this challenge? No one can do our share for us; each must perform his or her own part. Never before has the world been brought face to face with such stern realities. 'To be or Not to be, that is the question.' Whether we are to go back to the status quo which involves further disputations, hatreds and war; or whether we are to close the door on the past and go forward to a greater and better civilization. It was for this latter state that so many of our kindred died. For us to hesitate and falter is to betray their trust and expose our weakness, and our unworthiness. Let us remember these things in our day of thanksgiving; let us pledge ourselves to a moral re-armament which will bind us in the bonds of brotherhood and fit us for the task of Liberation - not of ourselves as individuals - but of the entire human family. If we fail in this, we deserve nothing better than to 'go back to the vile dust from whence we spring, unswept, un-honoured and unsung.' But surely we shall not fail - we, who have profited so much from the sacrifices of our kith and kin in the fields of battle. Surely we shall not be satisfied that they shall return to the old order of things; 'where the work man finds his way to the tomb, bleeding and footsore, through brambles and thorns of poverty'. It is so unnecessary that we should go back, and so desirable that we should not go back that I cannot contemplate the Australian people returning

to a state of society which made the past years of war impossible. Rather would I think that each and every one of us, irrespective of our individual opinions, would at least say that the unity which brought us victory must never be sacrificed to lose the peace. So, with this resolve firmly established within our souls, let us go forth with a determined effort to justify the confidence reposed in us by those who died to create the kind of society they fought to establish. To us then the task is given. Upon us depends the success or failure of the efforts of those who are gone. To us remains the opportunity to pay in full the debt we owe to them. My final appeal to the Australian people is 'Let us not fail'.